



October 21, 2016

## **“Boots on the Ground” march on Fleet Readiness Center Southeast**

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Petty Officer 2nd Class James Easter of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast explains how Sailors in the tire shop work on P-8A Poseidon tires, during the Boots on the Ground event Oct. 19. Every Navy Sailor who has been trained and certified on P-8A tires has been trained in the FRCSE shop. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Admirals, generals, colonels and captains filled the halls of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) Oct. 19 to share ideas, tour the facilities and touch base with the Sailors and civilian employees who do the hands-on work at the plant.

FRCSE functions as the Navy's aircraft mechanic; refurbishing, repairing and overhauling aircraft, engines and components. With current fiscal realities and high operational tempos exerting pressure to keep military aircraft ready to meet any demand – what commanders refer to as “readiness,” the importance of the plant has only grown.

“Across the force, our biggest challenge is having enough planes to fly,” said Commander, Naval Air Forces Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker. “The Fleet Readiness Centers are our primary partners in making that happen.

“From aircraft to components, engines to flight controls – whatever the need might be – our Fleet Readiness Centers can help us meet that need.”

Specifically, Shoemaker wanted to see how FRCSE has integrated the work of Sailors and



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its civilian artisans, engineers and avionics technicians during the “Boots-on-the-Ground” event. In the past, Sailors performed the replacement of parts and relatively minor maintenance at separate facilities, while civilian artisans completed aircraft overhauls and fixed components in need of more complex maintenance. Yet the Navy is now finding that the closer the two facilities are to each other, the more efficient the process of maintaining aircraft and components becomes.

FRCSE Commanding Officer Capt. Chuck Stuart is a major proponent of that theme. In fact, in many areas of the Jacksonville facility, Sailors work right beside civilians – learning the next level of repair work.

“The integration between our Sailors and civilians is crucial to what we do here,” Stuart said. “Anything we can do to streamline our processes will ultimately be cheaper for the American taxpayer, and provide our warfighters with the tools they need to complete their missions.”

In addition to integrating Sailors and the civilian workforce, FRCSE has focused on gaining new repair capabilities to remove the need to send military equipment back to the manufacturer for expensive repairs.

The first stop along the tour route for the 80 military officers and civilian leaders was FRCSE’s repair shop for the Navy’s Airborne Low Frequency Sonar (ALFS) system. The ALFS is the new sonar system lowered from Navy helicopters to pinpoint submarines and other craft above and below the waves. Produced by a French manufacturer, the Navy was forced to ship any of the sonars, known as transducers, in need of repairs back to France – resulting in increased cost and time delays.

FRCSE recently gained the capability to repair every part of the system, saving the Navy millions of dollars.

“The ALFS components are a great example of where we’re reducing repair costs that are growing well above inflation,” Shoemaker said. “Those efforts to get the repairs to the point where we’re doing as much as we can organically is the most economical and efficient way to go.

“That’s where I think there is tremendous value in this particular Boots on the Ground event.”

For Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags, commander, Naval Air Systems Command, the tour and discussions provided a chance to share innovations made by Sailors, departments or divisions, across the enterprise.

“We talked about a couple of things this morning that would be applicable to any other Fleet Readiness Center that we visit,” he said. “There were also some projects discussed



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that were new, unique capabilities standing up at FRCSE that will have significant impacts on fleet readiness.

“We talked about ALFS this morning, specifically the transducer assembly. That’s going to be huge.”

Beyond the increases in efficiency and slimmed-down timetables possibly gleaned from the trip however, lied a deeper purpose for many of those in attendance. Walking through FRCSE, the participants stopped to ask Sailors and civilians about their jobs. Boots on the Ground provides a unique opportunity for those in the upper echelons of leadership to go directly to people whose hands repair the machines on which they heavily depend.

“The biggest thing for me is that Boots on the Ground presents an opportunity to connect with the Sailors and Marines,” Grosklags said.

He went on to say leadership can take such an opportunity to learn what obstacles Sailors, Marines and artisans face daily – then act to remove or mitigate the obstacle.

“It’s a great opportunity for leadership to come out and directly hear from the Sailors and Marines that they’re doing with Continuous Process Improvement, and also to understand their constraints, resource issues and other barriers they face,” said Rear Adm. Michael Zarkowski, commander, Fleet Readiness Centers. “We can get those innovative ideas elevated quicker, and then get actionable outcomes.

“It also allows us the opportunity to learn about the ground-level issues, because solutions usually come from within 50 feet of where the work is being performed.”

Chief Warrant Officer Michael Guertin has been a driving force behind several of the new capabilities. Shoemaker presented Guertin with the Naval Aviation Enterprise Leadership Award.

“The integration between Sailors and civilian employees has been very successful at FRCSE with benefits abounding on all fronts,” Guertin said. “All of this is what Vice Adm. Shoemaker and senior leadership came to see first-hand and hear about - directly from these civilian employees and Sailors.

“The fact that senior leadership takes time to hear what exactly is being achieved ‘on the ground level’ here was an absolute delight to coordinate, and I cannot begin to thank all for the assistance provided in this endeavor.”



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Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, commander, Naval Air Forces, right, looks on as Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags, commander, Naval Air Systems Command, center, talks with Sailors at the Fleet Readiness Center Southeast electronics/countermeasures shop during a Boots on the Ground event Oct. 19. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Petty Officer 3rd Class James Beasley of the Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) hydraulics shop, left, explains how the Sailors work closely with FRCSE civilian artisans to repair aircraft parts with Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, commander, Naval Air Forces, during the Boots on the Ground event Oct. 19. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)





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Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, commander, Naval Air Forces, right, presents a Naval Air Enterprise Leadership Award to Chief Warrant Officer Mike Guertin, Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville's avionics division and AIRSpeed officer, for displaying outstanding leadership in the continuous process improvement culture at the command during the Boots on the Ground event Oct. 19. Guertin's technical knowledge and mentoring skills led to the creation of a work center to repair "failed to calibrate" equipment resulting in the recovery of 339 test sets valued at more than \$8.3 million. Guertin was a catalyst behind standing up the AN/AQS-22 Airborne Low Frequency Sonar and P-8A battery work centers at the military depot. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Petty Officer 2nd Class Aaron Charlet of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville, right, talks with Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, commander, Naval Air Forces, about the cost saving efforts using a standardized template to repair T56 engine harnesses which powers the P-3C Orion. The admiral visited the command as part of the Boots on the Ground event Oct. 19 to



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gain insight of the military depot's operations. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Randy Parker, Fleet Readiness Center Southeast P-3 deputy product manager, right, talks about some of the corrosion issues artisans are finding on the aircraft with Rear Adm. Bruce Lindsey, commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, left, and Brig. Gen. Allan Day, commander, Defense Logistics Agency Aviation, during the Boots on the Ground event Oct. 19. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Keith Wilkes, Fleet Readiness Center Southeast 2M instructor and program manager, explains some of the techniques Sailors and civilian artisans learn at the 2M Soldering School and how important the school is to maintaining aircraft readiness to Boots on the Ground participants Oct. 19 at Naval Air Station Jacksonville's Hangar 1000. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)